

2112

MOTION PICTURE/TV SERIAL TREATMENT

Written by

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*Adapted from the "2112" storyline
originally created by Canadian rock group Rush
("2112" lyrics by Rush drummer Neil Peart, RIP)*

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"And the meek shall inherit the earth."

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NOTE: Adult, hard-edged and realistic tone similar to Ridley Scott's original ALIEN.

Darkness.

A match is struck. We see the face of Father Brown, 60, manicured beard, short and perfect salt/pepper hair. He wears an obviously fashionable but quite plain robe.

Father Brown sits at an unrefined wooden table, a piece of parchment in front of him along with a quill pen in a brass reservoir. Using his match, Brown lights a tall golden candle to his right. Its wick is unnaturally bright. He lights another such candle on his left, methodically blows the match dark.

He stands. Even in conflicting shadows, the man is imposing: Svelte, regal, attractive. He looks down to and around a room we haven't seen.

"We are the Priests. Of the Temples. Of Syrinx."

A deep-bass rumble fills the area. Blasts of sunlight hit the scene as giant background walls slowly retract to reveal our location: Father Brown's colossal Temple courtyard. Brown stands on an elevated area accompanied by ten other male Priests of various age and build. Armed and armored guards position here and there, anonymous, fully helmeted, marked with the Red Star of the Federation (as most things are).

The outer courtyard walls fully retract to reveal a massive 80-acre interior, filled with thousands of people of every race and color. They wear like clothing and hairstyle, facing the Priests in ordered rows. They all smile. Neither fanatical nor wild, they are instead peaceful. Content.

The exterior City-World of Syrinx is now visible in full 360° daylight magnificence. The Temple courtyard is obviously high from ground level. Advanced aircraft fly in the skies and the Naidanac Sea lies in the west. Faint stars of the cluster and a pair of bald planetoids scatter through the clouds.

A staggering view.

Beyond the crowds, an aircraft carrier-sized transport ship gently lands on a permanent pad outside the Temple, its design and movement elegant and clean.



Night Shot of Syrinx

Brown breaks into a speech that mirrors tone and content of the 2112 album track "*The Temples of Syrinx*". He relates the importance of the day, with graduating 20 year-old Citizens now moving to their respective places in the collective, and current Citizens privileged to stand as witness. Some of the new ones are to be sent off-world, some will remain. All will benefit the whole of the whole.

Brown espouses duty to the Red Star of the Brotherhood, and fast obedience. Citizens need not worry about anything. All is provided. All they could ever need.

Citizens are dismissed. Some head in exacting order toward the background transport ship while others walk to singular exits at the sides. We follow one of the men, Teel, 33, a short, disarming, gentle-looking guy. Echoes of Elijah Wood. Like all Syrinxians, he's in great shape. He walks through the elevated streets of Syrinx, the many spires and metal flats of the city in full view.

The Syrinx quantum AI system is encountered along the way as shoebox-sized devices tactically placed, always observing and recording. We're treated to a few of its POVs.

Interrupting occasionally is a Temple broadcast of one kind or another, transmitting from variable-sized square (and not rectangular) video screens, embedded everywhere. All such announcements begin with the Red Star symbol. These messages are not unlike brief reminders in a day book, gently encouraging Citizens to behave in Priest-approved ways, for the good of the whole. The broadcasts are noticeably intrusive, and louder than needed.

Citizen Teel continues through Syrinx. We see in the near background a rigid, black metal ribbon extending from the ground and into the sky as far as the eye can see. An elevator car travels up the ribbon.

Teel continues on, enters his collective living facility. It's a tiny hostel-like barrack shared by six people: Double-bunks, a kitchen, a joint toilet facility between several other living spaces. Stark, barren, utilitarian, almost Medieval, an odd contrast to manicured technological city exteriors.

Teel must check-in with his personal AI, who greets him by name, describes his past day and then his next 24 hours. Teel is congratulated on having been invited to the Citizen graduating class of 2112, a high honor only a handful of mature Citizens will ever know. Obedience rewarded.

Teel is scheduled to repair a solar power array damaged in last week's storm. Apparently Teel's assigned job is specific to energy systems and their maintenance. Relaxing now, Teel puts on a pair of headphones connected to a Temple outlet. The sound he hears is a simple, formless drone. And yet, he smiles as if listening to Mozart.

A lovely woman appears, Yerdia (pronounced YAIR-do-uh), 26, pregnant. She's happy and smiling, as is everyone on Syrinx. Teel is obviously excited to see her, removes his headphones. He and Yerdia speak of the birthing farms, and the pending child. What a privilege for her to contribute this way!

Somewhat mischievously, she makes a "silence" sign with her index finger to mouth, motions him forward. She takes him into the brightly lit kitchen area, puts some vegetables into a processor of some sort and turns it on. There's a high-pitched sound, enough to cover the conversation. She brings him close, gets serious.

She whispers to him that there was a problem with the quantum AI in her workplace, while she was in charge of repairing the bacterial computer archive for the atmospheric domes.

Somehow, the Temple computers became accessible in the process, and she noticed a single Priest had a visible file. Teel can't believe it. Why would a Priest have an archive? They're never observed or recorded in any way.

Well, that's why she thought it odd! Furthermore, it was an ID file, just like a Citizen ID: A simple single entry containing DNA information, used to tag every Citizen as unique for the AI and for other purposes. Priests are always exempt from this.

Teel asks who it was. She says, "Father Brown". Teel becomes resolute, tells her this is improper, that she shouldn't have told him and furthermore she shouldn't have pried. She says she meant only good. She patched it right away, and the Temple archive is now invisible and secure. She's sure no one noticed.

Teel smiles, gently tells her to never again speak of it. She's a good Citizen. Nothing will come of it. DING! The vegetables are ready. She smiles at him. "Hungry?"

CUT TO: Dusk, in an area at the top section of Brown's temple. The city-world of Syrinx is alight with cold industrial-style plasma bulbs which make its endless stretches appear like an oil refinery. The Naidanac Sea is behind Brown as he and another man, 22, study papyrus scrolls laden with writings.

The younger man doesn't look like other Citizens, appearing more sophisticated and individual. Brown is urging him to speak the ancient languages of *Elt'vye Wi'llthies* (pronounced *Elt-vie Will-theez*) the Priests' original patron and founder. The young man struggles, frustrated by his inability to translate a specific piece. Good humored, Brown mentions that he wants to get this over before the meteor shower begins, and he implores his charge to try harder.

They stop to rest, because the younger one wants it. They talk briefly. It's revealed that the younger man is part of the Ruling class of Citizens, being groomed for supplementary leadership: The Priests can't possibly manage tens of millions on their own, after all, and new Priests are eventually needed.

The young man asks why he's being subjected to constant lessons with outdated texts that serve no purpose. Brown gestures to the sky overhead, filled with the over-bright stars of the cluster. He says that the suns of other worlds seem to serve no purpose, yet imagine the universe without them.

The young man is clearly not following...and even more obviously, doesn't seem to care.

Brown is deeply disappointed with the young Royal, and apparently not for the first time. He speaks almost to himself, wondering how one he personally chose could have reared no fruit by now, after so many attempts. So rare to find suitable Royals among the Birthing Farms. Ah, well.

A meteor shower begins high in the atmosphere above. They stand to watch, Brown in wonder but the young one unimpressed. Brown mentions that the event reminds him of the importance of knowing one's place, and also that nature has a way of removing the unneeded. On this, two guards emerge. Father Brown turns to the younger man, says that to question is not to serve. Brown nods subtly to the guards, they turn and guide the younger man away. Brown turns back and enjoys the shower.

The guards escort the confused younger man through an idyllic park/garden, inside the Temple itself. Truly gorgeous, it's artistically lit, features a large tiled pool in its center with a raised edge. Waters inside churn via natural springs.

The younger man says he doesn't understand what's afoot, and asks where they're going. The guards do not respond.

CUT TO: A corridor of black stone, lit with laser diode wall sconces (like LEDs but far more advanced). The guards walk the young man halfway down the corridor, stopping him in front of a lit panel. One of the guards presses the panel. A seamless door slides away, reveals a barely human-sized rectangular space within. One guard motions the young man into the space. The young man obediently enters, asks, "Can you tell me what I'm supposed to do?"

The guards close the door, dispassionately. Inside the space, the young man seems more fascinated than afraid. Nothing happens for a moment, and then water pours over the floor at his feet. He finds this curious, until the top of the rectangular space moves downward upon him, and does not stop.

A high-pitched, sharply truncated scream closes the sequence.

BACK TO: Father Brown, watching the meteor shower. He's approached by another Priest, Father Bradley, who tells him of the problem today with the Temple computer system: file breach. Minor, but it's possible that a single Citizen—a female name of Yerdia—may have seen the archive. Brown turns to Bradley with a stone gaze. Bradley single-nods, exits.

CUT TO: Space, above the outer atmosphere of Syrinx, with the meteor shower in full effect. We see a few defensive drones in place, plus an armed, two-man Solar Federation patrol ship. We then see the meteor shower from the cockpit POV of the ship, where two expressionless Syrinx pilot-guards also watch. One of them mentions into his headset that this area of the defensive grid is currently deactivated. Use manual tracking and visual observation til the storm clears. We see this deactivation as a schematic on a small rectangular screen.

In this same area of space where the meteors fall—above and out of cockpit view of the patrol craft—a door to what appears to be the bottom of a large cargo bay opens from absolutely nowhere. No ship to be seen, only a breach in space itself.

12 human-sized cylindrical objects quickly drop from the bay, toward Syrinx. The bay closes, showing stars and space again.

The freefalling cylindrical objects penetrate the atmosphere, glowing red-hot as they do. The meteor shower rages around them. An occasional rock sparks off the tubes, which appear to be metal.

Once through the planet's upper atmosphere, the tubes fall toward cloud cover, illuminated by cluster stars and moonlight. When they enter the clouds, the tubes separate and fall away, revealing humans in military-style trappings and parachute packs. They carry weapons. They are fully masked like astronauts, their black, form-fitting body armor of extremely advanced and obviously non-Syrinxian design. A few are clearly female. Completely badass, this bunch.

They exit the clouds, emerging 20,000' (6100 m) above the Naidanac Sea, and well offshore of Syrinx. An incredible vista.

They fall until barely above the ocean's surface, where they deploy chutes and safely plunge into dark waters. They cut their lines and begin an organized underwater scuba to shore.

BACK TO: Citizen Teel's quarters. He, Yerdua, and another Citizen are all asleep in their bunks. Occasional Temple Broadcasts still hit the screens every so often. Loudly.

Two Temple guards quietly enter. With great stealth, one of the guards squats down, removes a small red-tipped syringe and injects Yerdua through her ear canal. She moves a bit but does not otherwise respond. The guards leave, Teel rolls over in time to see them exit. He has no idea what's going on.

Teel lies there a moment, listens, but then as another TempleVision reminder activates, he returns to sleep.

BACK TO: The ocean. On the nighttime shores of Syrinx, the team who fell from the sky stealthily emerges from the surf. Once to land they quickly move to the base of a cliff. The first buildings of Syrinx are walking distance from here.

They remove their weapons and atmospheric helmets, revealing a group of 12 people who look absolutely nothing like anyone we've seen thus far, apart from being similarly human: Several races of men and women, hair in all imaginable aspects of individuality. They share none of the blank, uniform contentedness of Syrinx Citizens. They are *alive*.

The female leader is addressed as *General* by one of the others. This is General Tana, a chiseled beauty, 37, short-ish hair. Her second is a 30-ish man, Cloni, bald and athletic.



General Tana, in Drop Team Pressure Suit

As the ten others in the team sort equipment and such, the General lays back on the rocks, lights and smokes a small cigar. She absorbs the night sky, puffs away.

Cloni motions for his own puff. She hands him the cigar, he sits next to her, smokes a bit, hands it back. Cheers, he says.

She sits quiet for a moment then wonders aloud how many before them stared up at this very sky like they're doing right now. Maybe from the same spot.

Cloni asks for the cigar again, she hands it, he puffs. One of the other humans approach, an Asian guy, Giekat, 32. All's intact and ready, he says. The General motions for her cigar back, puffs casually. "Cool. Let us finish up here, will you?"

Giekat smiles, turns and walks back to the main group. The General reflects for a moment on what's to come. Sixty-million people. She's always wondered whose family survived, and where the ancestors wound up. Cloni: "Does it matter?"

"It matters. Double-check the stuff, will you?"

Cloni removes a small packet from his belt. He opens the packet, the inside is lit with a blue light showing two small vials like miniature eye-drop kits, crude and organic items compared to the tech they're carrying. General Tana takes a vial, gently holds it to the starlight and examines. She wears an ironic smirk, as if she can't believe it's come to *this*. She carefully hands it back to Cloni, he secures the packet.

Tana stands and tosses the cigar to the surf, motions everyone forward. She walks toward some rocks to a barely perceptible cliffside cavern entrance, no bigger than a manhole. She pulls a five-beam flashlight, shines around.

She turns to address the group. "200 years ago tonight, people. Timing's just an accident...but then, maybe not. You know the job. Let's make it work."

BACK TO: Night in Syrinx. Employed Citizens are about, the ever-scanning AI casts occasional thin beams of white, laser-like light over the streets and surfaces.

Citizen Teel is still asleep in his living quarters. Yerdua suddenly sits up in great pain, waking Teel. She thinks she's premature and Teel is not quite sure what to do. The AI instructs Teel to take her to a Birthing Facility. The other occupant, a male, 20, wants to help, but is instructed by the AI not to. This angers Yerdua, and Teel tells her to be careful not to blaspheme the will of the Priests.

CUT TO: With difficulty, Teel escorts an agonized Yerdua through Syrinx. She's bleeding now, but Teel says nothing.

They finally enter the Birthing Facility. It looks like a single, giant hospital room. Women are in various states of birthing within; babies are taken immediately away to collective bins. Temple screens broadcast tranquil images to the newborns, with gentle disciplinary reminders interspersed.

Overcome with pain, Yerdua collapses. Her blood paints the floor. Teel frantically calls for help. He's ignored. Yerdua goes blue from loss of blood, pulls Teel's face close to hers and whispers, "Don't leave."

She's gone. Teel fights to hold his anger and despair. A broadcast hits a nearby screen: "Custodial to Birthing twenty-four. Citizen Teel, return to habitat." Teel reluctantly rises from Yerdua's body and its spreading pool of blood. In a moment, he quietly walks away.

BACK TO: The twelve military humans. They navigate a completely dark and claustrophobic cave, lit here and there by their flashlights. Gritty and vérité.

General Tana, in the lead, suddenly stops. She pulls a piece of paper from her utility belt, looks it over. Cloni finds it curious. "Paper, General?" Tana smiles. "Absolutely. Helps me think." She says they're not far. Radio silence from here, on.

They move along til they see a multicolored glow on the walls: Bioluminescent fungi. The natural lighting becomes excellent as they enter an area of odd beauty, a chamber with a green, glowing pool of clear water in the center, five small waterfalls offset from it.

General Tana motions one of the team members forward. The soldier quickly dons his form-fitting atmospheric helmet, checks it, gives a thumbs-up and jumps into the pool. Tana signals for them all to hold. A few seconds pass, the team member reappears, gives another thumbs up. Tana spins her finger in the air, they all gear-up. One by one they jump in the pool.

BACK TO: Teel in his top bunk, glum. He turns to look down at Yerdua's unmade bed, then crawls from his own, stands on the floor a couple beats.

CUT TO: Expressionless, Teel enters the kitchen, takes a small but sleekly designed paring knife from a cupboard. He examines the instrument closely, lost in thought. He makes a decision.

CUT TO: Teel at Yerdua's bunk, expertly slicing a small, square piece from her top sheet, where her pillow would be. The pillow is there, moved aside. The AI makes an inquiry about it, but doesn't seem too concerned.

Once the square piece is removed, Teel blankly holds it in both hands. After a moment, he folds and pockets it.

The door bursts open and the same Temple Guards from before move through. Teel quickly covers the cut sheet with Yerdua's pillow as the Guards approach.

Teel steps aside as the guards, in machine-like manner, strip Yerdua's bunk. Her final articles in hand, the guards leave. Teel is mortified. The AI comforts him, says the ways of the Priests are just, even if we don't understand. Teel asks if the Priests could have wished this on Yerdua: No one helped; she was left to die; never once has a Citizen in distress been left to die.

The AI explains that the Priest decree of uniformity—and nature itself—rejects aberrations. If the woman died, there was surely an underlying flaw of her own making. Is it not better that society, the whole, is cleaner without her? Teel very reluctantly agrees. He's now concerned about his personal feelings, and why he allowed sadness and anger to overcome him. The AI commends Teel for his good and continued Citizenship, and says his initial response is the sort of thing he will overcome as he matures in the Brotherhood.

The AI also reminds him he has repair duty just after dawn: Two hours away. Teel lies down to sleep, tries to smile but cannot.

DAWN: In Father Brown's Temple the Priests mill about the garden area, sipping tea and dining on breakfast items. Some of the Royal class are here, in study with various Priests. Father Brown himself is away in a row of hedges, trimming berries and placing them into a bucket held by a Citizen.

At the raised edge of the center tiled pool, a young Ruling class woman sits in quiet, reading a Temple book and lost in study. Behind her, General Tana's atmospheric helmet very slowly rises from the water. After a pause, back down it goes.

BACK TO: Citizen Teel, who greets the sunrise outside his living space dressed and ready for his day. He wears various utility instruments, a hard hat, and climbing-style gear.

CUT TO: Minutes later, a passionless Citizen Teel is greeted at the base of one of the energy collection spires. Into a solo lift he goes, Temple broadcasts playing on a screen next to him. Teel is empty, and lost to thought.

The lift rises, its doors soon open to a goodly wind and a stunning view: Syrinx, Father Brown's Temple, the landed transport craft from the former day and the Naidanac Sea beyond. To the north we see the black ribbon of the space elevator and one of its cars descending.

Teel steps to a catwalk extending across a rose-tinted solar array. He attaches a safety rope to his belt, a line which spools from the wall itself. Out he goes.

BACK TO: Father Brown's Temple, at the center pool. The young woman from before is returning from a tea run, her book still sitting on the raised edge. She sits, goes back to her reading.

As she turns her pages, General Tana's entire team slowly and quietly slips from the water of the pool behind her. Tana sneaks up, cups the woman's mouth to silence her. The book falls in the water. Tana breaks a small tablet under the woman's nose. The woman loses consciousness, Tana gently lies her down.

The team begins an assault on the Temple. General Tana has ordered her team to use stunning and defensive force, only. No one is to be killed or unnecessarily harmed. These are, after all, their own people.

It's easy pickings, though, rounding-up the intellectual and contemplative Priests who all happen to be in the same place at the same time due to the Citizen graduation later that day.

The goal? Access to the entire Syrinx backplane via Father Brown's unique control codes. Then, deactivation of the AI and neutralization of all weapons systems and defensive grids. The *ultimate* objective of the mission, however, is a hidden digital archive where plans for some kind of seriously important device are held.

Before they can get Brown or any other Priest to cooperate, they meet resistance: A battalion of guards emerge in the outside graduation courtyard. Many of them penetrate the inner Temple areas. A fierce fight, made especially bad when it's discovered that the team's stun setting on their sonic/particle hybrid weapons will not work on the field-protected guards.

They try several settings and adjustments. No dice. Gas is also quite useless.

With great reluctance—and four team members dead—Tana orders weapons set to kill. She's truly disturbed by having to do so, while others are less philosophical.

They leave the garden area, moving toward the giant courtyard. They manage to get the city AI down for 10 minutes, allowing a window to commandeer the transport and escape with some of the Priests as hostage. They move across the courtyard area to do so, until it's overrun with Syrinx Guards.

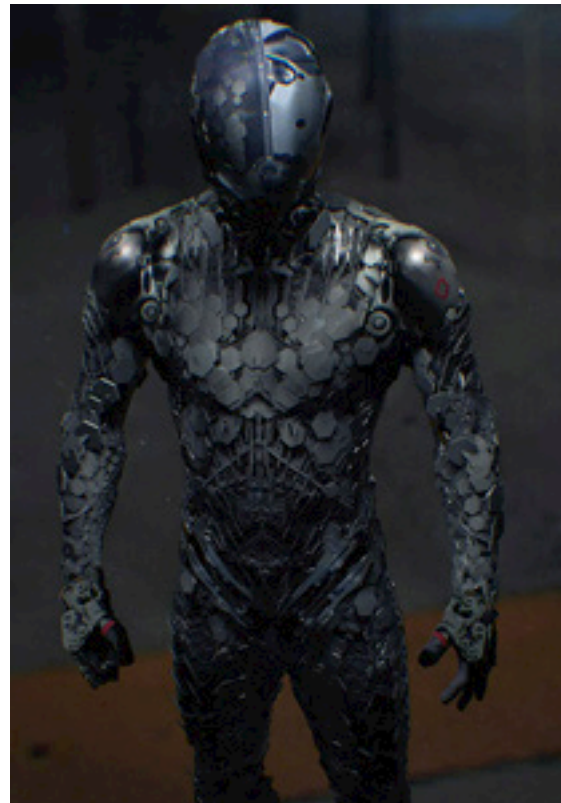
The battle begins, but it's Tana herself who clears the entire courtyard area with a sonic grenade.

Every Syrinx guard is either killed, maimed, or stunned to unconsciousness in a single devastating move.

They move across the mangled courtyard and attain the transport. Far below can be seen Temple guards approaching from several Syrinx streets.

Once inside the transport, the guard-pilots resist robotically. They're not killed but it takes one hell of a lot to get them down.

With the transport secured, Tana herself pilots the giant craft, with a female team member as co-pilot. They fly the enormous ship away from the Temple.



Syrinx Guard, Minus Accoutrements

CUT TO: Teel, out on the center of the solar array. He rewires a weathered, glass-encased device, asks the AI for assistance.

No response. Perhaps for the first time in his life. He's instantly confused. He tries again. Nothing. In the extreme peace of his high-altitude workplace, he wonders what to do. Several beats pass as he looks around, clearly lost from his inability to speak with the quantum AI. Or, with anyone.

He tries again. Nothing. He sits, as if waiting for the AI to return. Beats pass. Amid the beauty and quiet, he pulls the section of Yerdua's sheet. He examines it for a moment, and then movement catches his eye. He slowly looks up to see the approaching Temple transport, which is a curious thing to see.

CUT TO: Transport cockpit. All seems well as they fly toward the giant sets of energy collection spires. Tana says to open the throttle once clear. All they can do afterward is get away from Syrinx and its AI and then hold the Priests til they figure what's next. Plenty of food on the transport, so they could theoretically do this for awhile.

Except, they can't.

The AI goes back online. The transport's gravitational drive system goes dark, as do all other controls. The ship eases to a mid-air stop then slowly falls from the sky, directly in front of the energy spire Teel's working on.

Teel sees this happening, cannot believe it. He watches as the transport gains speed and drops to the ground. It "pancakes" on the city-world metal surface, the destruction causes Teel's energy spire to buckle. The spire topples down, Citizen Teel with it. The cut section of Yerdua's sheet is lost to the wind.

The giant transport ship has penetrated the metal city surface, opening what seems to be a sinkhole beneath its aft section. The transport tilts upward a bit as its back end slips into the sinkhole. It settles, unstable but not going anywhere.

Simultaneously, Teel falls with the tower and partial solar array panel. He diagonally strikes the sleek surface of the transport, breaking his impact. Still attached to his lifeline, he rides the rose-colored panel down the back of the transport like a bizarre sleigh.

The array catches an engine cowl and lodges, but Teel keeps going over the back of the transport and down into the sinkhole, which from here appears to be a deep drop to a huge underground river cavern.

Teel freefalls toward the underground river. The lifeline quickly catches, violently stops him. Dangling, he sees the open back of the transport.

The lifeline jerks as the solar array settles. It scares him, but then he's relieved. Until the solar panel frees itself and drops into the hole, Citizen Teel with it.

Down the pair go, smashing into the waters below. Teel is dragged under by the panel. He struggles mightily, removes his utility belt and his AI relay. Finally, he removes his boots, and with his last bit of air, swims toward the surface.

The current has him, though. He struggles for breath, being drawn deep into the dark areas far and beyond those opened by the transport. He sees, in the last light, that he's headed toward a tunnel of some kind.

The river goes fully subterranean, and Citizen Teel is carried by the current to certain underwater death. He tries to surface, but there *is* no surface. In a moment of calm, he decides to swim with the current, speeding his passage.

He's weakening. Just as he's about to give it all up he's suddenly thrust to air and freedom. He's now in a large grotto, lit with the same bioluminescence we saw earlier.

But this cavern is quite different: The lighting follows vague outlines of abandoned buildings and structures, all of them very similar to the City-World of Syrinx, but not quite the same. More...*panache* in their design. Character. They've clearly been empty a long time, and unlike Syrinx above there are written signs on each structure, in an unreadable language.

BACK TO: Father Brown's Temple. Emergency gathering under peripheral security. The remaining Priests—six of them—talk around another simple wooden table in an even simpler stone room. Lighting is nil.

They discuss what's happened, and what's to come. The breach in the City-World substructure is being hurriedly repaired, but may take time. That area of the city has been evacuated and restricted, of course. There will be no mention of this event. Discussion of it by any Citizen is cause for punishment.

One of the Priests asks Brown why he ordered the transport deactivated. Why not simply have the AI bring it back to them? There would now be no breach, and no emergency. Brown smiles at the man. "There are larger issues at hand, Brother. Keep your peace. And, your place."

Father Brown continues. "We know who they are. We know what they want. The question is, are they really a threat?" He waits for response. None comes. "Doubtful," he continues, "but if I'm wrong, well."

Father Leo addresses the group: "There were twelve of them. Only twelve. If there were more, would they not *all* return?" Father Brown reminds Leo that an entire and ancient civilization of those people will *indeed* return, should the doors between universes become open again. Brown thus feels they should create a contingency. Right away.

BACK TO: Citizen Teel, who explores his strange new surroundings. Teel finds structures and living spaces, intact and not. There's nothing technological or even useful, so far.

Teel finds a hat he rather fancies—a porkpie—but he puts it back where he found it. He searches the walls for TempleVision screens. He sits, clearly confused and conflicted without Temple guidance and instruction.

He stands and wanders near the original waterfall, looks for a way back home. He follows a tree branch to a curious area behind the waterfall: A small cavern of reflections, lovely echoey sounds, gorgeous luminance. A onetime garden, perhaps.

He sees a dark area on a wall, finds it's a small door. He opens. Inside are folded blankets of colorful design, the likes he's never seen (they're actually ponchos). There's also a small bucket with thin pieces of polished wood (drumsticks).

Behind all this is something black. A long, thick case. He pulls it out. There's a glowing set of small buttons on its side. He pushes one, the case hisses, releasing its perfect seal of ages. Inside is a preserved wooden object with metal strings and pearlescent keys attached to a long wooden neck. It has a hole in its middle.

An acoustic guitar. Of course, Teel has no idea what it is, but he's instantly enthralled. He pulls the item, completely amazed. He explores, touches the wires. They give forth a sound. A stunning, rapturous sound that fills him with wonder.

He plucks the strings here and there, holding the guitar all wrong. He strums clumsily and yet there's a simple elegance to his actions. Never has he heard such a sound! His eyes are misty as he experiments, at times awful and at times truly sweet. Finding his way. He's smiling and then laughing aloud. He strums some more then holds the instrument in front of him, examining with awe and glee. "A new wonder!"

"Want a lesson?"

Citizen Teel turns, finds four of the team members staring at him, the biggest of them General Tana, cigar in mouth. The General's team are a bit worse for wear, a couple are bandaged, and they're all soaked. They're also minus two members.

General Tana walks to Teel, extends her hand for the instrument. Teel gives it. He's frightened but very alive and fascinated by these "aliens" in front of him. Tana asks, "What's your name?"

"Teel."

"Good name."

The General sits, tunes, plays a little session. The sounds build high like a mountain, with additional notes falling gently, like rain. She finishes. "Got one of these myself. They kinda talk to you. If you treat 'em right. C'mere."

Teel cautiously approaches. The General puts the guitar properly into Teel's hands, holding his fingers from behind like an instructor. Tana makes a basic C chord, forms Teel's hands and fingers around it. After a couple tries, Teel plays the rudiment very well, indeed.

The General claps. "You're a natural. Hungry?" Teel nods yes. Tana points to one of the team members. The member removes a small, bright green tab from a packet and gives it to Teel. He looks at it, not sure what to do.

"Food," says Tana. "Very concentrated, time-release, all that. Good for a couple days."

Teel takes it. He nibbles, then chews the whole thing. His face lights up, but he's also very confused. "A field of wheat, and a mountain. I was working with Yerdua. She was a Citizen. There were clouds that day. This is the taste of it. The memory. How can that be?"

The General smiles. "Lousy texture, though, right?"

Teel fades away for a moment, clearly overwhelmed by all this. "You're not Citizens. Where do you live?"

"Teel, I—"

"We'll have to repair the energy tower right away! The Priests will require it."

"Yes, the Priests." She motions to Cloni, who opens his packet containing the two vials we saw on the beach. He removes one, hands it to the General. "A gift," says Tana as she gives the vial to Teel, who looks the it over, curiously. "What is it?"

The General explains that it's a very special, one-of-a-kind—two-of-a-kind—creation. Eye drops. Teel says he's seen similar drops used by medical staff. What are they for?

"They'll help you to see farther and stronger than ever. But not with your eyes." Teel doesn't understand. The General explains that Teel may have heard of she and her friends, perhaps legends or tales of times before the Priests.

"We are not permitted to speak of those things, and neither are you." He hands the vial back to Tana. She takes it, but then simply counters by gently placing it into Teel's tunic pocket without a word.

"Dear Teel. Let me try and explain. Please." Discussion follows, with the General gradually revealing that they are descendants of a great people the Priests call *The Elder Race of Man*. "Elder" civilization, however, began in a universe apart from this one:

In uncharted space, the Elders found a "doorway" into the universe where Syrinx exists. It was unstable, and only remained open using special technology in both universes. All was fine til the Priests rose to power. They destroyed the doorway on this side, making it impossible for the rest of humanity to ever again journey to Syrinx.

And, vice versa.

"After that, the Priests murdered our people, Teel. Your people. Millions of innocents, all gone. That was two-hundred years ago. We've come back at great risk to open the doorway again and allow our people to return and correct things. And also to set you free. We can't do it alone. Perhaps with your help."

Teel is digesting it all somewhat badly. "Yes, I know of you. And your demise. We all do." The General tries to soften the scene, says to him, "It's called a *guitar*, by the way. Nice one, too. That sound it makes is *music*."

Teel looks at the guitar, studies it and the General. He's not convinced. His face remains blank as he quietly puts the guitar back in the case, seals it with the keypad. She tries again.

"Teel, the Priests are not what you think they are. I know that's hard for you to understand."

Citizen Teel replies, "Your people were destroyed. For good reason." He stands and walks away. General Tana walks after. "Teel, please. You and your people are our people. The Priests took us away from each other. Ask yourself why they forbid you to love another person. Why you can't think or be anything more than you are. Don't be afraid to ask! You don't have to live their plan. None of us do."

Citizen Teel stops, seeming as if the words have touched him. But then he suddenly runs off. They decide to give chase. It ends when Citizen Teel falls from a rampart and into the river below. He's quickly carried away.

Cloni quips, "Well that went well." General Tana orders no one to go after him: If he survives the river, he'll have to make up his own mind. And anyway, they've still got another vial.

On that, a previously unseen team member brings a bound and gagged Priest to the fore, Father Bradley. Tana makes a motion with her hand, the Priest is freed from his bindings. He immediately curses them as poison, members of a dead race who destroyed itself and has no business here. "Your people are nothing. How many can you be? A handful?"

"We need to show you something." Cloni opens the vial packet. Tana glances at it, and then back to Bradley.

CUT TO: Teel in the wild underground river. The guitar case is an excellent flotation device. After a series of adventurous turns he finds himself ejected into the daylit Naidanac Sea. He comes ashore, climbs the cliffs, sits to think.

CUT TO: Teel, walking back to the massive Syrinx city-world while carrying the guitar case by its proper handle. He's of course intercepted by a security team.

CUT TO: Teel, escorted back into the City-World. He's taken to a building outside the main Temple, a small holding facility. They ask him to wait. Teel says he must see the Priests. He's ignored. The guitar case is placed across the room, on a shelf. The environment has no security or restraints, so Teel simply gets up, takes the guitar case, and walks out.

CUT TO: Teel, moving through Syrinx. He arrives at a place where all the dead are placed in a single efficient spot, as described on a plaque via subtitles.

It's a three story monument made of metal and stone, like the Temples. A pair of Citizen workers pour thimble-sized containers of ashes into a side compartment.

All over the monument are millions of names. Teel scans the last of the miniscule engravings. Five in, he finds "Yerdua".

The workers leave and bid Teel well. Teel sits, removes the guitar and strums his learned C chord. For the first time in his life, there's feeling. Simple and repetitive, but there.

CUT TO: The site of the wrecked transport, with repairs to the heavily guarded hole underway.

Four guards stand near one of the hole's edges, keeping watch like robots. One of them is suddenly hit around the waist with a grappling cable that somehow self-locks with a spark. The guard is instantly snatched into the breach, falling silent to the waters below.

As the remaining three guards turn to investigate, they too are taken away in the same manner.

CUT TO: Citizen Teel, who carries the guitar case through Syrinx toward Father Brown's Temple. He's quickly intercepted by Syrinx guards who instruct him to come with them for questions and judgment by the Ruling class. Teel refuses, insists he must see the Priests themselves. The guards are not used to being opposed, and are confused. They call in to the Temple, receiving instructions. "Father Brown will see you."

CUT TO: The bioluminescent guitar grotto. Three of General Tana's team members return with the four snatched guards, now bound with metal bands. The guards' communication with the AI was neutralized with the same charged cables used to grapple them. Giekat's idea. But, they're sure to send a party looking for them, so they've got to move quickly.

General Tana is pleased, tells her people to strip the guards and find them something else to wear. She then calls for Father Bradley. The Priest comes, but there's something very different about him now.

Tana taps a few buttons on a wrist-mounted bracer device. A three-dimensional map appears midair between them, large enough to walk around. It shows their current location, but has lots of blank "unknown" spaces.

Bradley discusses the presence of abandoned mines, created just after the Cleanse and not far from their current location. They're accessible from behind the waterfall. Most of the tunnels to the surface are intact, but they haven't been used in more than a century.

Once above and inside the city, they'll have access to the main avenues of Syrinx, and then on to the Temple itself.

The General doesn't like the current options but there's no other way. She instructs Giekat to remain here with the guards and make sure they stay put. If they're gone more than a day, Giekat's on his own and will have to do what he can. Which may not be much, but hey.

As they continue to prepare, we see the second eye drop vial on the ground, empty.

CUT TO: A massive Temple door opens. In steps the diminutive Citizen Teel, unescorted and carrying the guitar case. Teel enters the same vast, dark hall from the opening, where sit the unimpressed Priests at their plain table.

Teel moves directly before them, stands in a pool of light. A long silence as the Priests examine him. They say nothing. Teel can no longer contain his delight. "I know it's most unusual to come before you in this manner. But I've found an ancient miracle. I thought that you should know."

Teel opens the case, pulls the guitar. The Priests are noticeably agitated by the sight of it.

Teel continues: "There's something here that's as strong as life. I know that it will reach you." Teel plucks a bit, then strums his C chord, which now sounds quite a bit better. He improvises on the spot, and while not exactly pro, Teel's emotions fill the room through the strings. He smiles, amazed with himself and the "music".

He stops. The Priests glare. "Yes, we know. It's nothing new," says one of them. Another chimes, "We have no need for ancient ways, the world is doing fine."

Teel doesn't understand. "I can't believe you're saying—"

"Another toy that helped eliminate the Elder Race of man," says another Priest. "Or do you not know your history?" Yet another Priest adds: "Forget about your silly whim. It's just a waste of time."

Teel doesn't agree. "Our world could use this beauty. Just think what we might do. How can our society be made anything but better by such a joyful thing as this?"

Yet another Priest adds: "It doesn't fit the plan. It never did." Father Brown unseats, walks from the raised table area to Teel. He puts his hand out for the guitar. Teel gives it.

Brown examines the device, barely makes eye contact. "Where did you get this?" Teel explains that he fell from the energy collection station into an underground area, after the transport crash. The guitar was behind a waterfall.

Brown is concerned. "How fortunate you survived the fall. Do you not realize that all areas outside the city are forbidden?"

"Of course, sir, but—"

On this, Brown violently swings the guitar to the stone floor, smashing the body to fragments. He tosses the neck aside, composes, smoothes his hair.

"Don't annoy us further. We have our work to do."

Brown walks off, leaves Teel with the mangled instrument. Brown stops a few paces away, speaks without turning. "Just think...about the average. What use have they for you?"

Teel is dazed and hurt. Brown takes his seat again. "Return to your rooms." Teel speaks, tears noticeably in his eyes: "I brought a thing of light for the world. And you've taken it away. From all. The others, in the cave. They said—"

"Others?"

Teel explains that he encountered strange people in the cave, near the waterfall. Brown shakes his head. "And you say nothing til now?"

"I wanted to play the music. My music."

"Well, you've done that. Now tell us." Teel says the others were human beings, but not from Syrinx. Or so they said. They looked different from the Collective. One of them—a woman—could even play the music with great skill.

Brown, having heard enough, motions for the guards to remove Teel. They do. Brown looks up to his fellows, contemplates the next move.

CUT TO: The caverns behind the waterfall as the team embarks for Syrinx. General Tana and three of her team members escort Father Bradley.

Except for the Priest, they're all wearing Syrinx Guard armor and helmets, which currently have visors pulled back to show their faces.

They navigate by foot, eventually entering a vast chamber with an ancient metal catwalk across. It's completely dark. Tana's auto-map shows it to be a large cavern. The Priest is unaware of it. The smell is sour.

Tana fires a micro harpoon flare toward the ceiling. It embeds in the rock and day-lights the entire cavern. It reveals an immense mass grave beneath them filled with millions of bodies. Most are skeletal, some are mummified. A ghastly image. Men, women, children. The charnel house extends below them for as far as can be seen. Personal items are strewn here and there: Hats, shoes, and even a Teddy bear-like doll.

The Priest is ashamed, the rest of them are sickened and angry. Father Bradley turns to them. "I'm truly sorry." They continue.

CUT TO: Citizen Teel, outside his living quarters, observing the Syrinxian night sky. One of the space elevators ascends toward the heavens, and he blankly watches it go. The AI asks Teel what the problem might be. Teel answers, "Everything." The AI doesn't understand.

CUT TO: Later. Teel returns to his bunk, finds an older male Citizen taking Yerdua's spot. "Stop!" he yells, and knocks the other Citizen's belongings to the floor. The Citizen is dumbfounded. Teel gets hold, apologizes, asks forgiveness. The male Citizen smiles warmly, puts a hand on Teel's shoulder, "In the Priests there is always forgiveness."

CUT TO: Later that night. Teel, sitting-up in his bunk. He pulls some paper and a crude, self-constructed charcoal "pen" from under his pillow, his back to the AI camera. He draws a flat plain with a small, boxy house, like a child's rendering. He scratches-in a tree, with obvious fruit.

He puts it aside, lays back and stares at the ceiling for a moment. He rolls over, thinks, then pulls the tiny eye-drop vial from under the blankets. He's interrupted by the new Citizen, asking if tonight's Temple paper has been delivered. Teel tells him to check the kitchen. It's a very good issue.

When the Citizen leaves, Teel rolls back over, pulls the vial, again out of sight of the AI. He looks around, unscrews the small lid. Without hesitating, he uses the dropper.

It's an awkward position and the clear fluid misses his eye, rolls down his cheek. There's enough left for one more. He tries, succeeds. He lies flat on his back, a state of sleep fades him out.

CUT TO: Teel, waking from sleep on a small platform atop a black spiral stair in the middle of a windy dawn ocean. Perhaps 500' (152 m) high, the stairs and platform are absolutely flawless and featureless, a tight coil of ebon metal or stone.

The ocean is unrecognizable and the sky completely alien: It contains a thin, elegant planetary ring and six moons, but very few visible stars. He's obviously nowhere near Syrinx, or any planet of the Syrinxian system.

Teel stands, absorbs the beauty of the scene. A gentle, aged hand lights on his shoulder, from behind. Teel turns. There's a tall man in short snowy beard and mustache, short white hair, fatherly face. There's a noble presence to the man, with his black, slender robes that fit all too perfectly. He beams at Teel, reaches his hand out to gently touch Teel's face.

"Fear is never necessary, unless we wish it. You're safe, dear Teel. And, you are loved. As are all of our brothers and sisters. Everywhere." Teel is overwhelmed, but not frightened. "Who are you?"

"Oracle. And I have things to show you. What you are experiencing is real, but not. Millions of microscopic computers—for lack of better language—have attached to certain areas of your brain, routing thought directly through their own processors, creating in full what you're experiencing now. It's not a dream, however. Nor is it reality. Consider it...a recording, which it is. And you are absolutely alive within it, for a limited time. Behold..."

He leads Teel light years away, to astral nights, galactic days. Teel sees the beauty of the sculptured cities and the pure spirit of mankind, revealed in the lives and works of the galactic Elder Race which originally settled Syrinx; the works of gifted hands, that grace a strange and wondrous land.

Teel sees a way and a life that was crushed by the Priests and their so-called Solar Federation, long ago.

He sees how meaningless life has become with the loss of these things, and how ugly the rise and dominance of the Red Star.

They left the planet long ago, but the Elder Race still learn and grow. Their power grows with purpose strong, to claim the home where they belong.

Home to tear the Temples down. Home to change.

The vision ends. Teel wakes in bed. He looks around for Oracle and the wonders he'd shown. All is silent. His disappointment is palpable, his darkness immediate.

As Teel lies there thinking of what he's seen, the AI asks if he's okay. Teel plays it cool, says he's fine. He slips from his bunk and walks slowly to the exit. The AI gently suggests that he not break his sleeping pattern. Discipline may follow.

Teel ignores. He walks outside, observes the nighttime spread of a city he can never again see in the same light. "We are a dead world."

He's scanned by an airborne quantum AI, but doesn't even look up. The AI seems satisfied, moves along. "This cold and empty life. And nowhere to go."

Teel straightens out, sadly smiles, nods, walks away.

CUT TO: Teel, standing in the brightly-lit kitchen area, a vacant look on his face as he opens the utensil drawer. He pulls the paring knife he used to cut Yerdua's sheet, examines it. He places it on the counter before him, moves it around like a compass needle.

He takes the knife in hand, contemplates. And then with both hands, he puts the sharpened tip of the knife directly against his left jugular. He gives a final consideration of what he's about to do.

As he starts to press down, four Temple Guards burst through the front door. One of them goes to Teel's bunk, finds the vial. The others surround Teel and the knife is confiscated. Off they go.

Meanwhile, General Tana and her group emerge from the mines and into the nighted streets of Syrinx, putting their visors down for anonymity.

At hand is attaining the Temple and then Father Brown's personal chambers. He's the only one who knows where the quantum mix equations for the doorway are kept.

Father Bradley is repeatedly greeted by Citizens as he walks with Teel's disguised teammates. All seems to be working. One teammate complains that the guard's weapons aren't quite as powerful as their own. Odd.

From the place where General Tana and her Priest team emerged we now see Giekat exiting along with the four Syrinx guards. The guards wear the colorful ponchos that Citizen Teel had found, and look somewhat ridiculous with their bare legs showing out from under. Their hands are obviously bound, but covered by the ponchos. Once completely on the street, Giekat presses a button on his personal bracer.

BACK TO: General Tana, whose internal helmet visor shows a security light. She stops the group, says they need a place to wait for a little while. The Priest asks why, but the teammates do not. The Priest knows a place. They follow. In secret, Tana gives Cloni a covert thumbs-up.

BACK TO: Giekat, finding his way and attracting attention from passing Citizen workers. The constant AI scans tell us he's being tracked. In no time, he and his charges arrive at the space elevator closest to the transport crash. An elevator car is here and preparing for travel with two Citizens aboard.

The single guard at the elevator is easily overcome. Giekat instructs all Citizens to move away from the entrance. A squad of five guards runs toward them. Giekat drops his weapons and stands with his hands up. The elevator's power is cut, the guards take control. "Come with us, please." Giekat smiles. "No." The guards seem confused, one of them communicates with a command center through an internal headset. Giekat addresses them. "Nice night, isn't it?"

CUT TO: Citizen Teel, being brought before Father Brown and the other Priests, this time at the edge of the gardens. They stand in semi-circle with Brown in the center. One of the guards shows Brown the knife Teel had in hand. Brown places it on the edge of the fountain behind him. Brown tells Teel that he has become soiled. There is no way to correct the problem, thus, Teel must unfortunately be removed.

Citizen Teel address them: "This world is wrong. It could have great beauty, but it has your emptiness instead. A place Citizens are left to die in hallways, alone."

He steps it up: "You killed Yerdua. As you killed my people."

Brown motions and Teel is taken away.

CUT TO: With the four teammate guards, Father Bradley enters the lower level of Brown's Temple. He's given immediate access. As Bradley passes through the gate, ten guards suddenly emerge and quickly overpower the four guards with him. There's a great deal of protest and confusion.

The interdicting guards pull the captured guards' visors and find that they are, in fact, regular guard Citizens with the typical hair and features and not General Tana's party, at all. The guards apologize to the Priest. Bradley glares at them, turns and makes way up the enormous stairs to the upper levels as four Syrinx Guards enter the Temple, passing the confused 14 guards on their way up the stairs to Bradley.

CUT TO: Citizen Teel, now in the same black kill corridor we saw before, with the young Royal. He's escorted to the same sliding door and placed inside the crusher room. The door closes, water jets douse the floor. The roof moves downward.

Just as death seems nigh, the roof stops. Teel hears a struggle outside, then silence. The roof jerks, then moves back upward. The water on the floor recedes, the outside door opens. Teel cannot believe what he sees.

CUT TO: Brown's private gardens, and a manicured hand silently taking Teel's confiscated knife from the edge of the fountain. Father Brown is here, alone, looking upward through the Temple's open ceiling. He hears a sound, turns, is surprised but very happy to see Father Bradley.

"Brother! It's true, then! How delightful. But how sad for the others. We've much work to do." On this, Bradley raises the paring knife, grabs Brown and pulls him close. He puts the knife to Brown's neck. "What we are is foul. And we've always been thus. You especially so."

On this, four guards march into the garden, surrounding the two. Father Brown is visibly relieved. From the same doorway, out steps Citizen Teel, his arms folded, a scowl on his face. Brown's not so relieved anymore. Citizen Teel says, "There's a better way, Father Bradley. After all, death would be a gift for this horrible man." On this, the four guards lift their visors. It's General Tana and her crew.

The General motions for Bradley to drop the knife. "Father, relax." It's hard for Bradley, but he does as the General asks, lays the knife on the fountain.

The General commands Brown to take them to the archive. She tells the Priest that he certainly knows why. Brown admits that he does, and says it would be his pleasure to take them there. The General warns Brown that one piece of funny business and it's over for him. She also instructs Bradley to stay behind and wait for them, or maybe provide distraction, just in case. During this talk—and without being seen—Citizen Teel removes the knife from the fountain's edge, stashes it.

CUT TO: The group takes a Temple elevator for what seems a long time. No one says a word. They emerge to an underground area which appears to be an automated safe deposit box chamber of titanic size. There are easily millions of tiny, individual wall vaults in this place, all entirely unmarked. Ten stories high from floor to ceiling, as far as the eye can see. Once used for rare Elder archives, now a place for Priestly whim.

Father Brown smiles warmly. "Take your pick. No doubt fortune is with you tonight." A sophisticated robotic arm moves across the vaults, retracting to a central area where a keyboard and 3-D terminal sit. Cloni goes there, assesses that the terminal requires a seven digit code and three alphabet letters.

The General wants to know which box. Brown says he actually does not know. Cute, but surely he does know how to *find* said box. He does, and there's no chance of him saying a word. All these efforts, wasted. But not a total loss, because now the doomed Elder Race will forever live in the past, as it should.

Citizen Teel steps forward. He walks to the Priest, afraid but unafraid. "Your hand, sir." Brown refuses, Citizen Teel grabs it anyway. They stand for a moment, Teel's hatred seething. "I knew you killed her. But her death has created life for us all. You will have to know that."

Teel pulls the knife, the others react. "I'm not going to harm him. Observe."

Brown is defiant and unafraid as Teel uses the knife to slowly cut his palm. Blood seeps. Teel says that Brown's numeric DNA sequence is the coded archive location. Yerdia saw the archive briefly exposed, and was killed for it. A pregnant woman, who knew nothing. And a lovely soul, even through her Priest-induced mask of Collectivism.

Teel didn't even know how to love her. He wanted to, though. And perhaps he did in spite of his conditioning.

The General motions Cloni forward, who produces a kit from his belt, and collects a bit of Brown's blood. Brown can't believe they would have such equipment on their person. The General is amused. "We're a bit more advanced than you are."

Brown isn't impressed. "You still lack the means to open the doorway. Not to mention, you can't possibly do it from here." Cloni has run the sequencer. He hands it to the General. She looks at Citizen Teel, hands the readout to him, tells him to do the honors. Citizen Teel types into the console:

YYZ-100-100-1

"We coulda guessed that," jokes Tana. The robotic arm springs to life, moves with incredible speed deep into the vaults, disappears from sight. In a few moments, back it comes with a small metal box. Teel takes the box, opens it. Inside are two odd-looking, hyper-advanced memory sticks. The General examines them, as does Cloni. Standard tech, but will require some adaptation. Now all they gotta do is get back to the ship.

"Not without Giekat."

CUT TO: The Temple elevator, and back up they go. The General says to expect resistance. The door opens and there stands Giekat with Father Bradley. No one can believe it. Apparently, Giekat was brought to the Temple for processing. Bradley simply retrieved him. Nice break!

But, they have to get back to the dropship. The space elevator? No good. It would only take them to an orbital station, with far too many chances of interception. However, the Temple does keep a compliment of defensive fighter craft at ready, *if* they can pilot them, and *if* they can get to the hangars.

CUT TO: The team invades the Temple fighter craft bay. It's quite a battle. They lose one of the team in the melee, and Father Brown escapes, but not before killing Bradley. Citizen Teel sees Bradley's death, pursues and stabs Brown with the paring knife. But, it's an amateur stab indeed. Brown flees like a coward, basically unharmed.

During the battle, Cloni manages to disable the city's quantum AI once again—"These guys are idiots"—but it will only last for a minute, maybe two. Enough time to hopefully escape the atmospheric defense grid.

The team is down to five, plus Citizen Teel. They steal five small fighters, which are incredibly cool in design (more "borrowed" Elder Race tech).

Away they go to the Syrinx sky...just as security closes the hangar doors. Once they're safely beyond the atmospheric defenses, the AI reactivates and they're immediately fired upon but are fully protected by shielding and great flying.

The General searches a specific coordinate for the dropship, instructing Cloni to transmit the boarding code. They can't find the dropship, however, and are forced to briefly engage with Syrinx fighters, until the back landing bay of the dropship appears in space, from nowhere.

They make a mad dash and get safely aboard the ship. The last craft to land is mangled on impact, as is the teammate pilot. The General immediately gets the archive copies to the Chief, a tall, muscular black man, 50, who in turns gets his team on it right away. They've had some issues with the fusion bypass, but it should hold well beyond their need.

CUT TO: The bridge of the dropship, about the size of a large kitchen. It's a wondrous time for Citizen Teel. He sees his long lost brothers and sisters of humanity, and their many different faces. It's now a sprint to the area of space where the doorway should be, and once was.

BACK TO: Syrinx, where Brown instructs the elite aerial forces to intercept at specific coordinates, which will be given to them in flight. Any and all unidentified craft must be destroyed on sight. Saturate the area in those coordinates with anti-protons. Complete obedience and expendability is expected and commanded.

BACK TO: The dropship, where we discover that the ship cannot remain dimensionally shifted and still attempt to open the doorway between universes. Also, Citizen Teel is feeling odd, says he's seeing double at times: Normal effect of being in a neighboring dimension.

"How's it feel to not exist?"

They're close to the doorway coordinates when the Syrinx forces are seen approaching. Easily 100 ships of various types. Not good. Citizen Teel asks how they plan to open this "door". The General tells him the entire dropship is designed to act as the doorstep. All they need is to get the energy formula right.

In this strange silent few minutes before fate, there's some nice character bonding and storytelling. Citizen Teel tries a cigar. The Chief returns, says he thinks they've got it: All this time, all these years, and they almost had it down.

Anyway, the intermix and harmonics should be perfectly aligned with whatever was on the other side. At least enough to open the doorway for a minute or so. But, there's still one problem: After two-hundred years, will there be anyone around on the other side to complete the thing? Tana beams: "Let's find out."

With the Syrinx system far behind, the dropship approaches the breach coordinates, seen from the bridge screen and tactical readouts. It's time to re-shift to the proper dimension. But, the Syrinx assault force is close. They must be kept at bay. Shielding is excellent with this kind of vessel but won't hold long against so many fighters.

The General and her team gear up to sacrifice themselves, that the dropship might survive and their brothers and sisters return. It's a somber but joyful moment of imminent death. Out they fly, to intercept the Syrinx forces. Citizen Teel must remain behind, and watches tensely from the bridge.

The fight begins. Syrinx pilots are somewhat predictable and slightly confused by the fighter craft being their own. The General takes advantage. She and her team lay suppressing fire near the dropship, which is now dimensionally back shifted and visible. It looks like a scoop with engine banks and a bridge. Practical, but bizarre.

The attacks on the dropship are numerous and damaging. Shields hold, but the anti-proton stuff is taking a toll. The General loses a ship, but takes quite a few out, as well. Back on the dropship, they're ready. Two levers are pushed forward. The "scoop" energizes. As it's powering-up, the dropship is hit with a barrage, and everything goes offline.

The shields fold, the ship tilts hard, knocks the two bridge crew out, cold. Citizen Teel has ridden out the trauma, but now doesn't know what to do.

In the cosmos outside, it's all nearly over. The General cannot keep the Syrinxians at bay. Attempts to lead them away are failing. It's done. The General then sees a damaged Syrinxian on a collision course for the dropship's bridge. She makes a decision, ramming the Syrinx ship with her own. The General's ship breaks apart, and she's ejected with it, flailing away into space.

The collision debris rocks over the dropship, damaging areas of the fuselage but missing the bridge, entirely. Teel tries to wake the bridge crew, but they're definitely down. Teel sees the co-pilot's hand on the scoop power levers. Teel decides to push them forward. Nothing. Then he pulls them backward. They lock, and now he cannot move them again. He struggles and struggles, but they just won't move.

That's what they're supposed to do: The scoop powers up as the Syrinxians approach for the kill. The scoop ejects a visible force into space, toward what seems to be emptiness. This causes a shockwave around the ship, blowing all the Syrinxian fighter craft backward for quite some distance, like toys.

But, nothing happens. While the space where the beam points is slightly discolored, there's no activity, no hint of any success. The Syrinxian fighters regroup, make their way back to the dropship. They're almost upon it when...

The Elder Race returns.

Thousands of ultra-advanced starships of all imaginable size and shape blast through the opened universal breach. Among them are three titanic vessels truly awesome to behold. With effortless grace, the Elder ships neutralize the Syrinxians, but do not destroy them. The biggest three ships head directly to Syrinx. Citizen Teel watches all this in wonder.

BACK TO: Father Brown stands in his Temple, looks out the roof as he is wont to do. A sub-bass rumble approaches. The Temple vibrates. Voices of frightened citizens echo from outside.

CUT TO: Father Brown runs outside, stands on the main Syrinxian street before his Temple. One of the three titanic Elder ships enters the airspace above, stops midair, eclipses all the sun and clouds. It waits, then fires a steady green beam toward the largest Red Star emblem, on the Temple itself. The emblem detonates to fragments. The rubble settles, there's a long pause. A slow, thunderous voice broadcasts from the ship:

"Attention all planets of the Solar Federation. Attention all planets of the Solar Federation."

Silence as the Citizens go quiet. And then, from the ship, another announcement:

"We have assumed control."

End?